



Kiev, Mother of Russian Towns

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KIEV, MOTHER OF RUSSIAN TOWNS¹

“ WONDERFUL is the Dnieper in calm weather, when freely and smoothly it moves its full waters through forests and hills. No stir, no sound. As you look at it, you do not know whether that magnificent broad current is moving or not. It seems as if it were all made of glass—as if that pale-blue mirrored road, unlimited in breadth, unending in length, were flowing and winding through a green world. Pleasant is it then to the hot sun to look down from his height and sink his rays into the cool of the glassy waters and to the bordering woods to light up their clear image in the green curls of its waters. They press together with the flowers of the fields, towards the waters, and bending over them look at them and can never look enough, and can never dwell too long on them with their bright gaze, and they smile at the river and greet it as they bow their branches. But to the middle of the Dnieper they never dare to look; no one but the sun and the blue sky can look at that, and it is but few birds that will fly as far as the middle of the stream.””

So wrote Nicolas Gogol about a hundred years ago. At that time extravagant exaggerations, still combined with reminiscences of the epic, were in our literary tradition. So we must not take the words of the great writer too literally, but even in the most critical mood we must always confess that the Dnieper round Kiev is a really magnificent sight, at least in Spring, when the river is full and overflows to the breadth of seven miles.

The Dnieper is the younger brother of the well-known Volga.² It is the second river in rank in the bounds of European Russia. To this corresponds the relation of the two branches of the Russian people: the South-Western, or Little-Russian, lives mainly on both sides of the Dnieper, while the North-Eastern, or Great Russian, is more connected with the Volga. Thus Volga and Dnieper are symbols.

The town of Kiev of which I am writing is of course mainly indebted to the Dnieper, that great water-road already so well known to the ancient world under the name of Boristhenes. But if we are to believe the archæologists of Kiev, human life on these banks is not only earlier than the times of Greece and Rome, but also the period of the Jews and Egyptians, and even

¹ This *Review* has published various views on the Ukrainian question. Mr. Shulgin's article will explain itself. It is the view of a sturdy opponent of the Ukrainian claim and also of the Bolshevik Revolution.—ED.

² The Volga is 2,300 miles long, the Dnieper more than 1,400 miles.

the half-mythical time of Atlantis. Primitive men lived here as long as twenty thousand years ago.

Of what kind was that man? It would seem that we cannot say anything more about him than that he was of the clearest type of cave man, but we can and must say something of the caves themselves; as we shall see from what follows, the caves have played an equally important part in the history of Kiev as the blue waters of the Dnieper. Thanks to the peculiar qualities of that Kiev clay which later became famous among engineers, these parts must have attracted men from the most ancient times. As he dug into the steep cliffs, the primitive man could without much trouble make himself a dwelling extremely comfortable for those times. Nature was no doubt luxurious here before the time assigned to an event which is legendary, but has left a deep trace on the minds of future Kievans. According to tradition the holy Apostle, Andrew, the First-Called, after long wanderings among the Scythians, whom he instructed in the Christian faith, reached the parts where later Kiev was to grow up. Enchanted with the beauty of the scene which unfolded itself before him, the Apostle blessed the hills, woods and waters and then raising a wooden cross, prophesied that here would arise a great city in which the Christian faith would shine. In memory of this event, seventeen centuries later there was built in Kiev a so-called church of St. Andrew, planned by the famous architect, Rastrelli (1700-71), who also did a lot of work for Petersburg. The church in the Smolny Institute on the banks of the Neva and that of St. Andrew in Kiev are very alike in their architecture.

The picture which one sees from the parapet of St. Andrew's church is really astounding. Of course I may be told that "every snipe praises its own marsh"; all the same I will risk saying that this is one of the most beautiful views in Europe. Below, like a map unfolded on the table, lies the flat Podol, the lower part of the town where the sparkling gold domes of the churches bear witness that St. Andrew's prophecy has been fulfilled. And behind these gold cupolas "unlimited in breadth, unending in length" lies the blue river. It passes away to the horizon on a giant carpet of meadows, ending with a dented border of dark forest. If we look the other way, there we see rich masses of gardens hanging over the river from the clay precipices, clusters of green, and beyond them the upper town picturesquely dispersed on the slopes of the hills.

Of course, we may recommend caution in regard to what we enthusiastic Kievans may say about Kiev and the Dnieper. In any Russian is inherent his ancestor, and that means a man for whom rivers were the alpha and omega of existence, for they were the only arteries of life in this country. In some Kievans perhaps there are still incarnate the souls of Varangers, those who travelling up and down the Dnieper and its tributaries, finally built up a great Potamokratia, which is the Greek word for a river State. Thus the most uncommunicable instincts can arise in the consciousness, or rather in the half-consciousness, when the eye ranges over this great blue road, with which were indissolubly connected the main routes of Russia.

There is a theory of one Jewish lover of Antiquity who asserts that the name Kiev is nothing else than the distorted form of the word Zion. The Khozars, who were the predecessors of the Varangers in these parts, were not Semites by blood, but practised the Jewish religion. They, it is supposed, in the same enthusiasm for the hills and river as St. Andrew had felt, named the town which sprang up here New Zion. But this version, it seems, has no credit with scholars; it can only serve as an illustration of the fact that from early times Jews were settled in Kiev, where as early as the 12th century there were "certain misunderstandings" with the local population, and these conflicts were noted in the *Letopis*.³ These troubles did not prevent the formation in Kiev of a numerous and rich Jewish colony which in 1917 was reckoned as numbering over 100,000.

But the classic theory of the name of Kiev is borrowed from the *Letopis* of Nestor, a monk of Kiev who wrote his annals at the end of the 11th and beginning of the 12th century. By the way, Nestor gives information which was in his time already legendary. The story is that Kiev was founded by a certain Kii, who lived here with his brothers Shchek and Khoriv and his sister Lybed. As a matter of fact, from early times Kiev has contained a Kii Street, a Khorev Street and a Shchek Hill, and there is also a stream called the Lybed. As to who Kii was, it seems that there were keen discussions even in the 11th century. One feels a certain controversial irritation in the usually so calm lines of the respected monk Nestor when he writes: "Some who do not know, say that Kii was a ferry man on the Dnieper . . . if he was a ferry man he would never have gone to Tsargrad with his fleet; but this Kii was the prince of his

³ The annals kept by the monks of the Monastery of the Caves.

tribe, and when he was with the Emperor they say he received great honour from him."

The history of Russia, according to Nestor, also begins with a story of three brothers, though without a sister. Rurik, Sineus and Truvor, according to the monk of Kiev, were just such Varangers as the Swedes, Danes and Norwegians, but the question is complicated by the fact that the tribe Rus, to which these three brothers belonged, in contrast with the above-named, did not live in Western Europe. Thus we are not forbidden to think that this tribe emigrated wholesale to Eastern Europe. In fact, this is asserted by Nestor himself when he says that the three brothers "took all Rus with them." If the last-named circumstance is true, then in view of the means of transport of that time it implies that the tribe was not numerous. Maybe it is for this reason that it completely melted in the Slav element to which, however, it contributed very much; it is thus that some mixture of amalgam forms a strong metal for everyday use. However, it was, in any case, according to Nestor, the three brothers who appeared in 862 in answer to an invitation of Slavonic and Finnish tribes, which were desperately quarrelling among themselves, and brought order into the north of Eastern Europe, choosing for their centre the city of Novgorod.⁴

On the death of Rurik in 879 (his brothers died before him), the senior of the tribe, Prince Oleg, became regent for the minor, Igor, son of Rurik. Taking Igor with him, Oleg left Novgorod; descending the Dnieper he arrived with a great force at Kiev. At this time the town was ruled by the brothers Askold and Dir, who had driven out the Khozars. Askold and Dir were former members of the bodyguard of Rurik, but Oleg killed them on the plea that they were not of a princely family and therefore ought not to rule Kiev. Oleg decided to stay in Kiev and, charmed like so many others before and after him by the beauty of the hills and river, and also valuing the commercial

⁴ Apart from Nestor's story there is a legend which is handed down by many Slavonic annalists. According to this tradition three brother princes, Chekh, Lekh and Rus (there was also a sister), after killing the Roman Prefect Aurelius, left the Roman province of Norik in the 3rd century after Christ. These three brothers, it is suggested, were founders of the Czechs, Poles (Lyakhs) and Russians. Scholarship is more inclined to believe Nestor. However, he, too, when speaking of the dispersion of the Slavs, asserts that it took place in consequence of a conflict between the Slavs and the Romans, and also that the Slavs were still called by the name of Noritsi; that is, they were inhabitants of Norik, which is now Slovenia, and part of Croatia.

and political advantages of the site, Oleg pronounced the famous words which in our time nettle certain people who are anxious to represent ancient Kiev as the capital of an imaginary State called Ukraine. Rising to the height of prophecy Oleg, as he looked at Kiev stretched out at his feet, said : " This will be the mother of the Russian Towns."

From the conquest of Kiev by Oleg in 882 begins the more or less trustworthy, and in any case recorded, history of that time. The annals of Nestor begin thus : " This is the story of past times; where our Russian race came from: who was the first prince in Kiev; and how the Russian land was formed." It is thus that Nestor joins the Russian State indissolubly with Kiev; it is just this town, according to him, that is the political and national cradle of Russia. This is well known to all; but it is useful to repeat it just now, at a time when white is called black and black white, in other words when some try to represent the very heart of Russia as not Russian. And so the history of Russia for several centuries is the history of Kiev.

When Oleg came down the Dnieper, this river was one of the links of that precious belt which the Norman Varangers laid around young Europe. According to Nestor " the great road from the Varangers to the Greeks " began from the great lake Nevo, that is the river Neva, on which afterwards appeared brilliant St. Petersburg. By rivers and lakes with short portages, where the Varangers dragged their ships over the ground, this road led down to the upper waters of the Dnieper. When these were reached, the vessels of the Vikings were guaranteed for a long journey. By the Dnieper they moved southwards about 1,000 miles. About half-way down the river stood Kiev, but when they had gone 300 miles further they were faced by very great trials. Here nine rapids, that is, nine semi-waterfalls, did their best to smash the ships against the granite rocks which stood out from the depths of the river like nine gigantic dams. Now, in these parts, there has been constructed the famous Dneprostroy, planned by the Imperial Duma before the war and brought into being by the Bolsheviks. When they had successfully passed the rapids, the Varangers reached the lower waters of the Dnieper. In springtime these estuaries were so full of fish that came up from the Black Sea, that in some parts an arrow shot from a ship remained sticking up in the water as if it had fallen into a lump of dough. When they had passed the Black Sea, which the Greeks sometimes called Hospitable and

sometimes In hospitable, and the Arabs called the Russian Sea, the Varangers reached Byzantium. Here the Varanger tribe which had settled in Kiev and mixed with the Slavs was called Ros, but sometimes they were also called Dromits, which means fugitives. This last name is probably connected with the flight of the Slavs from the Romans; but perhaps it also throws light on the three brothers headed by Rurik in 862. The appearance of Rurik in Novgorod might have been a consequence of misfortunes of some kind, after which the whole tribe of Ros went off to Eastern Europe, where, leaning on the shoulders of the Slavs, it became a powerful people. In Constantinople the behaviour of the Varangers was very various. Sometimes they attacked Byzantium, demanding ransom or simply plundering; sometimes they traded on this world market; sometimes they entered the services of the Greeks. Other Varangers indulged in innumerable adventures in the Mediterranean. They left their mark on Ragusa, Sicily and Spain. In 852 the banks of the Rhine were laid waste by a certain Rorikh. Perhaps it was the same who ten years later, as Rurik, came to Novgorod to found Russia. The Vikings also devastated the coasts of England, France and Italy. Thus there was a round route mentioned by Nestor, a grandiose belt or bracelet encircling Europe. As the sickle of a young moon is only part of its full circle, so the young Russian State stretching at that time along the Dnieper and its tributaries with its capital at Kiev was only part of the great water road described by Nestor. It is this circumstance which governs the old or Kiev period of Russian history. In this sense, this epoch is very distinct from the following period of Moscow. Kiev Russia was part of Europe. Moscow long remained a negation of Europe.

It is true the magnificent dream of Canute the Great, King of England in 1016-35, was not destined to be realised. King Canute was half a Slav; his mother was a Pole. It was perhaps the Slav blood that urged him to the unrealisable, but anyhow, he dreamed of uniting in one all the Northern States. This was a Utopia: but it very well illustrates the part played by the Varangers, those half merchants, half pirates, who tried to build on a mosaic of tribes and races a kind of international empire. In any case, as far as concerns Kiev and Kievan Russia an historian who has specially studied this question says "The influence on our life of the appearance of the Varangers was enormous; it radically drew us into the orbit of the life of the

European peoples and in the 9th century, at the very dawn of our history, prevented a breach between Russia and Europe.⁵⁵

Let us return to Prince Oleg, who ruled Kiev till 912. He was the hero of all sorts of legends; anyhow, he seriously threatened Byzantium and thereby gained great advantages for Kiev. This cannot be said of Prince Igor, son of Rurik, who is known mainly by his tragic death in 945. Igor's son Svyatoslav was a knight without fear or reproach. He invaded Byzantium and at one time conquered Bulgaria. The next Prince Waldemar, or in Slavonic Vladimir, also intervened in the civil troubles of Byzantium and, conquering Kherson, demanded in marriage Anna, sister of the Byzantine Emperor. He accepted Christianity and enforced the conversion of Russia in 989. Nestor pictures him as a kind of Saul who became Paul. Some regard the monk as an apologist of the Kiev dynasty, but we have confirmation of his words from other sources which can hardly be regarded as inspired. The national epic is particularly rich in its mention of its prince. Destiny, which is sometimes capricious, decided that this epic should be preserved not in Kiev or its neighbourhood, but in the extreme north of Russia by the White Sea. There were written those ballads which in Russian are called *Byliny*, and as if to illustrate the capriciousness of history, these *Byliny* have reached us in a markedly north-Russian dialect. These present Prince Vladimir as a beneficent ruler, constantly giving him the title "the bright sun".

As is known, the blending of the Northmen with the local population was in some parts an extremely painful process. In Great Britain the conquerors met with stubborn resistance. Apparently nothing of this kind happened in Russia, where, according to Nestor, it was not a conquest but a "call". It must be mentioned that, before the Varangers came, there were already rich towns along the great water-road such as Novgorod and Kiev; and the Varangers, it seems, were invited to defend them. This was an example constantly given by Byzantium, and the fact that Igor came into conflict with the local population was an exception that seems to confirm the rule that the process of blending went fairly easily. It appears that the upper class of the Slavs served as a more or less peaceful mediator between the Varangers and the rest of the population. Under Vladimir were built the first Christian churches in Kiev, and Greek monks

* N.T. Beliayev: *The Beginning of Russia*.

opened schools and monasteries. The connection with Byzantium became stronger and the influence of the world capital of the time soon transformed Kiev. But the old links with the Vikings were still strong. Thus St. Olaf of Norway, when for a time he was driven out of his country, lived in Kiev at the court of Vladimir, as did his son Magnus. In their turn some of our princes in distress "ran over the sea," that is, to the Varangers. Kiev lived by the common life of Europe, as far as there was one in those times.

Vladimir died in 1015, after which Yaroslav continued his father's traditions. Kiev, like Tsargrad, was ornamented with a church dedicated to St. Sofia, and other handsome buildings, and became so fine a town that when the Kiev Princess Anna became Queen of France, Paris, after Kiev, seemed to her very unpresentable. Three other Kiev princesses were married by Yaroslav to Polish, Hungarian and Norwegian sovereigns. These marriages naturally still further strengthened the connection between the Kiev State and Western Europe. There are also mentions, by foreign annalists, of family connections of the Kiev dynasty with the kings of England, and of the arrival at the court of Yaroslav of two English princes seeking refuge. Kiev at that time seemed to foreigners a rival to Constantinople and astonished them by the vigour of its life.

To the time of Yaroslav belongs the building of the remarkable city gates, called the Golden Gates. These Golden Gates apparently produced a strong impression on the inhabitants of Kiev; for the following legend about them has been preserved. At some moment when the city was in danger the Archangel Michael, called in the legend "the Knight Mikhailik", who from ancient times was regarded as the patron of Kiev itself and of the whole of Kiev Russia, took these gates and carried them away to Mount Athos, a monastery in Greece, particularly esteemed by the Russians. The legend says that these gates stand in Athos to this day, and if someone as he passes them should say "Gates, Gates, you must again stand in Kiev," then the ancient gilt, which has grown dim, at these words shines out like the sun.

But there exists another monument of Yaroslav the Wise, not at all legendary, but very real, in his code of law. This code is known under the name, given it in the 10th century, of "Russian justice."

Yaroslav died in 1054. Among the later princes of Kiev there

must be mentioned a remarkable ruler known as Vladimir Monomakh. He received his name because his grandfather on the mother's side was the Byzantine Emperor Constantine, who was also called Monomakh.⁶ Legend says that this Constantine sent Vladimir his headdress which served him as a crown and is called by us "the Cap of Monomakh." This emblem later gave to Pushkin the occasion to write his well-known line: "O Cap of Monomakh, thou art heavy"; and this expression was always used in Russia to describe the burden of the crown of the Tsar. Monomakh is also remarkable for his literary work, one of the first monuments of the kind, known as "My Charge to my Children." This document gives a clear picture of the high moral standard of Kiev princes, at least of their best representatives; it is, so to say, the culmination of the spiritual attainments of the Kiev rulers. Kiev did not take part in the Crusades, for its decline came before then. The thought of conquering the Holy Sepulchre with sword and bloodshed was, of course, a picturesque flower of idealism, but still a flower out of the heathen forest. The Kiev princes, in their best representatives, were nearer to Christianity, when they tried to soften the minds and manners of their half-savage time. Vladimir died in 1125; his reign may be regarded as the swan song of all that was best in Kiev. All his life he fought that evil which in the end ruined the Kiev State. That was the extravagant development of local interests, local ambitions and local patriotisms at the expense of the single whole. The prevailing system of that time, by which all members of the ruling house of Kiev received some province or other as their domain, led to a constant undermining of the power of the capital. On this ground arose constant disagreements which led to civil wars between the nearest kinsfolk. Receiving heavy blows from the provincial princes, Kiev lost its significance and even ceased to be the capital, and the new centre which replaced it was still weak. The results of this situation were not slow in showing themselves. In the 13th century there burst upon Eastern Europe the terrible eruption of the Tartars. The Russians, divided among themselves, were routed, and Kiev itself was burned to the ground in 1240. The Italian monk Plano Carpini, who six years later travelled in these parts, gives us the

⁶ This legend is historically impossible. We may mention that Vladimir Monomakh's wife was Gytha, daughter of Harold Godwinssen, King of England.

following description of what he saw : " The Tartars marched on Russia and made a great slaughter in the land of Russia. They broke down the towns and fortresses and killed the people, besieged Kiev, which was the capital of Russia, and after a long siege took it and killed off the inhabitants of the town : when we travelled through their lands, we found numbers of skulls and bones of the dead lying in the open field; for this town was extremely large and very populous, and now it was reduced almost to nothing. There still remained there only some 200 houses, and their inhabitants are kept in the heaviest slavery."

As this is the point in our story of Kiev where we may, so to say, pay our tribute at the burial of its ancient glory, it would be in place to put here the epitaph of the dead. This is all the easier because the tribute to Old Kiev has already found expression in words of great power and skill. In the aureole of world-wide glory which has surrounded Leo Tolstoy, there has been obscured another writer of the same name, Alexis Tolstoy the Elder, a poet and dramatist of the 19th century (1875) who is not to be confused with the younger Alexis Tolstoy, the contemporary novelist. Alexis Tolstoy the Elder was a recognised master of verse, but his contemporaries did not understand his deep political and historical conception. His thought went half a century in advance of the ideas prevailing at his time. Among other things this poet, in a series of admirable ballads, has given us a most fascinating idealisation of Old Kiev. The view of Alexis Tolstoy is extremely interesting. He is, as it were, the ancestor of later Russian writers who assert that in the spiritual plane there are two Russias. One Russia has its roots in the universal, or at least in European culture. In this Russia the ideas of goodness, honour and freedom are understood as in the West. But there is another Russia; the Russia of the dark forests, the Russia of the Taiga, the animal Russia, the fanatic Russia, the Mongol Tartar Russia. This last Russia made despotism and fanaticism its ideal. Feeling the duality of his country, the poet tried to find a living incarnation of both Russias. Certain historical data made it possible to incarnate the first ideal of Russia in Old Kiev, and to concentrate all the negative features of the opposite tendency, eastern and despotic, in Moscow, that rose on the spiritual ruins of Kiev.

The great question of the time when Kiev fell and the future strength of Moscow began growing up in the north was the

attitude to Tartar rule. While the Kiev tradition still lived, there was an open fight against the Tartars. We have seen how Kiev fell. What followed after this and shaped the education of Moscow, was tactics of another kind. Moscow preferred to bow before the conqueror in order to live—and Moscow survived. That is its justification. It built up a strong city; it again gathered together in one the Russian lands which had been torn asunder, and among them also Kiev. This is not only its justification, it is the glory of Moscow; but this accommodation and this vitality were bought at a heavy price. In this very process of accommodation under the Tartars, what in Russia is called by the hardly translatable word *holopstvo* (slave mentality) entered the Russian character. Idealising Old Kiev, Alexis Tolstoy pictures her princes as skilful leaders respecting and valuing their opponents. As wise rulers, by the side of their princely power they maintained a national representation; a kind of parliament called the *Veche*. On the other hand, in the poet's view, the *druzhinniki* (thanes) of the Grand Prince of Kiev, those heroes of the Byliny, show the greatest loyalty to their prince; in the same way, the Veche or Assembly is fully loyal to them. All these Kievans, whether rulers or ruled, are full of the sense of their personal dignity; they hold the ideas of honour and freedom higher than anything. That is what Alexis Tolstoy thinks of ancient Kiev; and at the same time he brands with unusual sharpness the Tartar spirit acquired by Moscow, the coarseness and harshness of its manners, and especially the disgusting servility which pervaded everything around the Moscow Court. Tolstoy even refused to call this Moscow and this spirit of rulers and people by the name of Russia. He says: "And see, when you have glutted yourself with the Tartar spirit to your heart's content, you call it Russia."

In the 12th century Kiev finished its mission as the capital of old Russia. The lighthouse on the banks of the Dnieper was extinguished. At that time in the north-east on the banks of the Moscow river there began a spark which later grew into a mighty torch. For a long time Kiev was important only as a religious centre. Here we must return to the celebrated Kiev clay which made possible a number of underground dwellings in the slopes of the hills. In the 11th century, religiously minded people used this circumstance; not far from Kiev in the hills where at that time there grew a wonderful forest, they dug out catacombs in which was founded a monastery that became

known far and wide under the name of the Kiev Cave Monastery (*Lavra*). The caves of the Lavra leave an unforgettable impression. You go up a long passage, narrow and cramped; a monk shows you the way holding a candle in his hand; you go a long way and with your road lighted up by a flickering flame, you come now on ancient churches of the size of a small room, now on century-old tombs where sleep incorruptible the relics of saints. The cross passages lead to new labyrinths; you are struck and even frightened by a dead human head that seems suddenly to grow up out of the ground—that is a saint who died here after burying himself up to the neck. The last time that I was here I looked for longer than usual at the hands of one of the saints. One could see them quite clearly through the glass of the grave; those were the same hands which wrote the first Russian Annals and spoke the sacramental words “This is the story of past times.” This monk was the historian Nestor, who died in 1110 and lies in this grave.

The Cave Monastery of Kiev became a sanctuary for all Russia and for a long time was the symbol of All-Russian unity. Moscow fulfilled her historic mission in the East. Laid waste by the Tartars, Kiev fell under the power first of Lithuania, then of Poland. The link between the Rus of Moscow and the Rus of Poland, owing to several causes, was very much weakened. The Cave Monastery of Kiev was the lighthouse which ever shone over the frontiers of hostile States. To worship in the Kiev sanctuary was counted a deed pleasing to God in all countries wherever Russians lived. On 15 August, which is regarded as the festival of the Kiev Lavra, there came hither tens of thousands of pilgrims. This lasted till the World War. It was a kind of mystic attraction to Kiev, as an unconscious tribute to the fact that it was there that grew up the idea of religious and national unity.

And so Kiev, as centre of Russia, no longer existed. History is necessarily studied systematically and therefore primitively. That is why to this day, in the minds not only of foreigners but of very many Russians, after the fall of Kiev there vanishes somewhither also the Russian people which inhabited and surrounded Kiev. Of course many of the inhabitants round Kiev perished from the Tartar arrows and a part certainly went off north-eastward, but the mass of the people could not move and stayed where it was. The life and habits of those who did not leave the old hearth of the Russian people is well known to

those who have specially studied this question, but for everyone else the picture is far from clear. To a certain extent it was this that caused what follows. When afterwards there developed a separatist movement aiming at dividing the South of Russia from her North, those who took the name of Ukrainians found it fairly easy to suggest that the Russians emigrated towards Moscow and that under the rule of Lithuania and Poland there appeared a new people, namely the Ukrainians. This was helped by the fact that at those times, that is from the 15th century, there appeared on the banks of the Dnieper a new class of persons who called themselves Cossacks, and who have later been represented as Ukrainians of the Ukrainians. The word Cossack is widely known in Europe, but there has come to be associated with it an idea which has very little in common with the facts.

The Cossacks appeared simultaneously on the frontiers of Moscow and of Poland, and the cause of their appearance was identical. The Cossacks were joined by persons who for any reason could not be satisfied with their life either under Moscow or under Warsaw. The Moscow Cossacks, going away to the frontier of the State, came into conflict with numberless Eastern peoples, conquered them, and in the course of time, making peace with Moscow, offered them these countries as a present, for instance, Siberia. The Cossacks from the Polish-Lithuanian side settled on the banks of the Dnieper, dwelling at the place already described, where there are the famous rapids. The Cossacks Beyond the Rapids (*Zaporozhtsy*) formed a curious military Order which partly revived the old sagas of the Northmen. Like the old Vikings, the Cossacks built themselves unreliable vessels and, descending the Dnieper to the Black Sea, went forth to win military fame. They warred not only with the Greeks and the Turks, who had occupied former Byzantium, but also with the Tartars settled in Crimea, who were at that time subject to the Turks. It is interesting that even in exterior appearance the Cossacks of the Dnieper to a certain degree preserved the Varanger tradition; they wore long flowing moustaches and they shaved their heads, leaving only a tuft at the top. These people were constantly fighting the Turks and Tartars, sometimes on the plea that they were "fighting for the Cross against the Crescent". To tell the truth, their religion was rather peculiar. They dreamed of military exploits but these, as with the Northmen, took the form of huge pillage.

But in some respects this Military Order rose to the height of asceticism, demanding chastity from its adepts. As to their political and social order, it was the most free of republics; here all were equal; as to property, if it were not common, in any case it did not have much significance. Riches were despised, and the loot was drunk away the next day after it had been won with costly bloodshed. However, the freedom of the Cossacks, which often passed into savage anarchy, ceased as by magic from the moment that they went on campaign. Then an iron discipline took its place under the command of their chosen leaders. To this we must add that all this extraordinary army was for the most part composed of fugitives, that is, of persons who not only had no legal right to freedom, but were regarded by the government as criminals. If they returned to their native parts, many of them would have had much the same lot as the cattle of their masters. On the rapids they obeyed no one but God, and on campaign no one but their Ataman. These people were a formidable military force. They were well known to the sea powers of the West, as bold corsairs. When in the 17th century Venice thought of building up a grand alliance against Turkey, she first of all proposed to the Polish King Wladyslaw that he should give orders to the Cossacks of the rapids under his rule to attack Constantinople from the sea whenever they liked.

To understand the course of the following events, we must know one very important factor. The Russian people, which could easily agree with the Lithuanians, had it not in its character to get on with the Poles. To this national feature were added two others, the religious and the social; the Poles were Catholics and the Russians belonged to Greek Christianity; but when the Russian aristocracy, which survived after the Tartars' invasion, began to pass over to Catholicism, and at the same time got polonised, the result was that Pan (noble) and Pole came to mean one and the same thing, so that there came to be two "banks" of the river, one Catholic, Polish and aristocratic, the other Russian, Orthodox and democratic. This was of itself dangerous, but the Polish Government did not see any great misfortune in it; if the Russian bank were unarmed, it was possible to crush it by force in spite of its numbers. But the Russians were excellently armed—for the reason that the Cossacks, who lived at the rapids, regarded themselves as Russian. Now we have seen that the Cossacks were fighters *par excellence*. From time to time, these heirs of the Varangers

fought with the crescent, but when Polish pressure on the Russian people was too much felt, the Cossacks turned against Poland.

It cannot be said that in this conflict between Russia and Poland—a conflict which decided the fate of both—the leadership of the Cossacks came directly from Kiev. At that time Kiev was really a deserted city; the magnificent churches built in the 11th century lay in ruins; in ruins also was the spiritual life of the city. There was not any upper class in Kiev, or even a trading class which could head the movement, but all the same, Kiev, or rather the national and religious idea which it embodied, undoubtedly was the guiding star of the whole Cossack enterprise. This was shown in a peculiarly characteristic way on the day when the whole Zaporog army with the Hetman Sagaidachny at its head entered their names as "brothers" of one of the monasteries of Kiev. By this gesture the Cossacks in a body declared themselves defenders of the Orthodox faith, whose centre remained as before, in Kiev. The other important factor in this matter was the foundation by the celebrated Metropolitan Peter Mogila of the Kiev Religious Academy. Peter Mogila is regarded by some as the predecessor of Peter the Great. That is because Mogila decided in his struggle with the Jesuits to use their own weapon, namely, education. However, the struggle with word and pen came too late. Mogila created a pleiad of most talented pupils who challenged the Jesuits on the pages of their religious writings; but Peter Mogila himself died in 1647, and the next year the Cossack Hetman Bogdan Hmelnitsky raised his famous insurrection, which decided the Polish-Russian conflict not by inspired speeches or bitter polemical writings, but by the sabre of the Zaporogs with the help of the sword of Moscow.

At the time of the wars of Hmelnitsky, took place an event which very clearly reflected the whole character of the bloody struggle between the Cossacks and Poland. Not all the Russian nobility had accepted Catholicism. Among those faithful to the old Russian people was a certain Adam Kisiel; he was a first-rate orator who several times on the Diet in Warsaw skilfully defended the freedom of the Russian faith, but he was loyal to the Polish sovereignty in so far as he belonged to the upper class of nobles and could not have joined the rebel Cossack mob. This man was used by the Polish government as mediator to negotiate with Bogdan Hmelnitsky. A better ambassador, of course, there could not have been; but all the same when Adam

Kisel with his escort entered the town while Hmelnitsky was waiting for him, on one of the streets the Cossacks threw themselves on him in the most vigorous way, showing that they wanted to lynch him. Kisel turned to the crowd saying " My friends, we are not Poles; I am Russian, my bones are as Russian as yours." To this the crowd replied, " Your bones may be Russian but the flesh on them is Polish." Hmelnitsky himself set to work with his bludgeon, and saved the envoy from the hands of the infuriated people. In his negotiations with Kisel in 1648, Hmelnitsky thus defined the object of his rising: " I want to free the whole Russian people from Polish bondage."

These words, pronounced after Hmelnitsky's triumphal entry with the bells ringing from the Golden Gates, to the ancient capital of Vladimir and Yaroslav, which had seen the glory and greatness of this same Russian people now under Polish persecution, received a special force, sense and significance; the pitiable ruins of Kiev reflected the majestic shadow. These reminiscences of Kiev come out clearly in 1654. After resounding victories, Hmelnitsky began to suffer defeat and asked for the help of North Russia in the person of the Tsar of Moscow. At that time remarkable speeches were delivered, in which it was declared that the Tsar of Moscow was the spiritual heir and even the kinsman of the old sovereigns of Kiev, and that therefore, as an eagle covers his nest with his wings, so should the Tsar of Moscow take under his high protection " Kiev and all Little-Russia." The expression " Little Russia " was at that time understood in the Greek sense. Little Russia means the old, original fundamental Russia. The Cossacks regarded themselves as Russians of the Russians.

Moscow gave Hmelnitsky the help for which he asked; this led to a war between her and Poland which lasted for 13 years. In spite of the length of the struggle, neither side had a decisive success. Poland was compelled to cede to Moscow the left bank of the Dnieper, but the right remained with her. However, Kiev, which lay on the right bank, by way of exception was ceded by Poland to Moscow for 200,000 złoti. We may say that this was cheap. Kiev at once began paying interest to Moscow on the sum which had been expended on her.

Under the Romanovs Moscow may in a way be said to have turned back towards Europe, and it was here that she gained by the acquisition of Kiev. The pupils of the Kiev Academy of Mogila were summoned to Moscow and there they tried to

direct Moscow religion, which was very ardent but clouded with superstitions, on to a more fruitful path. The reforms of Peter the Great, as is known, met with strong opposition, especially among the Moscow clergy. At that time Peter leaned on the clergy of Kiev, and monks of Kiev were his faithful fellow-workers and enthusiastic admirers of his reforms. The first man to show Russia the full significance of Peter was Theophan Prokopovich, a famous monk of Kiev. It was he who pronounced the classic tribute over the grave of Peter: "What is it that we are doing and seeing, Russians. The sun of the Lord of Russia has set. We are burying Peter the Great." Though Kiev seemed to have fulfilled its mission and retired into the shadows, the Kiev idea was now in good hands. In Petersburg came a fruitful development of that cutting from European culture which had been grafted on the wild Russian tree.

The city itself remained almost deserted. In 1787 Catherine II, who visited it, wrote: "All the while I have been here I have been trying to see where is the city, but up till now I have found nothing but two fortresses and a suburb. All these ruins are called Kiev and make me think of the former greatness of this ancient capital." To the Empress's question as to what impression Kiev made on him the British Ambassador, Fitzherbert, replied: "To tell the truth, this is an unenviable place; you see only ruins and huts." In 1835 the population was only 29,000 and its upper class was strongly polonised. Open polonisation was not so very dangerous; but the Poles chose another way. They are not to be blamed; for Russia, in the person of Catherine II, had dealt them an unforgettable blow—I am speaking of the partitions of Poland—and to this they replied by working for a partition of Russia.. The idea was, out of all that population which speaks the South Russian dialect, which is different from that of the North, to make a separate people. Thus began the work, which has gone on for about 150 years, of trying to make the South not Russian. The word Ukraine has been brought into action. Ukraine is a very old Russian word, as old as *Margo* in Latin, *die Mark* in German, *la marche* in French or *the Marches* in English. Ukraine is the exact translation of this term. This word, in some parts of Southern Russia, is used as a proper name. This circumstance was utilised to give the idea of a territory suitable for a sovereign State, inhabited by an Ukrainian people and speaking an Ukrainian language. Kiev revolted against it with all its energy. It was

precisely in this connection that Kiev again began to feel itself a centre of Russian thought, and it began to grow rapidly. From 1835, which is the year of the foundation of the university at Kiev, may be dated the renaissance of this city. By 1917 Kiev already possessed a population of 640,000.

In this period of Kiev history, we are bound to note the rôle played by the university, which bore the name of St. Vladimir. Instinctively rises the thought that the very air of Kiev must contain some molecules of historical experience. The Universities of St. Petersburg and Moscow yielded to a considerable degree to the doctrines of Karl Marx, with all the consequences which followed from this. But that of St. Vladimir combated this tendency for decades. At the same time it raised its voice against the collective ownership of land which was practised almost over the whole of North and East Russia,⁷ and its ideas, though they had to wait long for one to realise them, were at last embodied in the land settlement of Peter Stolypin, who was wholly guided by the Kiev doctrine and started that great reform which was to liberate the peasant of Great-Russia (the North) from the slavery of collectivism. Of the fruitful result of this work we may judge from the following: not long before the war a delegation of German experts came to Russia and studied Stolypin's reform; it came to the conclusion that if this were completed, "Russia will be unconquerable." It pleased fate that it was just in Kiev that Stolypin should meet his tragic death from the bullet of a revolutionary. This happened during a gala performance in the city theatre in 1911 in the presence of the Emperor. The bold reformer was buried in that ancient Kiev Monastery of the Caves, which by all its roots went back into the past of Russia. When their hour came, the Bolsheviks with great fury threw his remains out of the grave. This is intelligible, for they no longer had a great opponent to confront them.

Kiev met the World War from a viewpoint which was characteristic of it. Both the Japanese war and the Great War Kiev regarded as great mistakes. Here it is perhaps in place to say that in Kiev there was a strong tendency, for a long time past, to regard itself as at once Anglophil and Germanophil. Kiev highly valued the wonderful orderliness of that beacon of State, constantly varying between Whigs and Tories, that guides the

⁷ South Russia never followed the system of communal land tenure which was common to the north and east.—ED.

progress of England under the motto “ Forward at half steam.” The phrase belongs to Stolypin, and it was just in such a progress that he saw his own ideal for Russia; but the practical model of this policy was of course given to the world by Old England. In the Germans Kiev valued good neighbours with whom our country had for very long been at peace. There was also the circumstance that the merchants of Russia had always been a barrier against those anarchical tendencies which are the pet theme of the adepts of the so-called “ *âme slave*. ” For these reasons Anglo-German rivalry, which was one of the causes of the World War, gave no pleasure to Old Kiev. But Kiev, remembering that once war had begun, there was only one duty —to win—did all that depended on it for victory; and it was precisely the South-Russian troops, among whom there were many Kievans by birth and spirit, who in the first year of the war had the happiness of writing some brilliant pages of history for Russia,⁸ and this in spite of the efforts of the German Staff, which through its clever agents tried to suggest to South Russia that it was not Russian but Ukrainian, and therefore ought to be hostile to Russia, and should wish for her defeat.⁹ Russia was not able to stand the strain of the World War, whose object was unintelligible to the great mass of her population; and thanks to a profound misunderstanding between the monarchists and the monarch himself, she lost her Tsar, without being able to set up a new one. This enormous country was thrown into an unprecedented revolution; but in this destructive process Old Kiev again became young and was the strong-hold of counter-revolution. This old nest was, in all the length and breadth of Russia, the city which not only did not pull down the flag of the monarch, but on the contrary, raised it on the top of the high cliffs of Kiev and flouted the elements of disorder. There, to speak symbolically, the Imperial standard was unfolded over the grave of Stolypin.

In revolutionary conditions the fight for the monarchy was identical with the fight for freedom; and only Kiev, made wise by a history of a thousand years, insisted in spite of the fury of revolution, that monarchy and liberty were synonymous in a country where that animal nature with which Kiev had

⁸ In 1914-15 Galicia was largely conquered and held by troops of the Military District of Kiev.—ED.

⁹ After the collapse of Russia, the Germans enforced this separation by insisting, at Brest-Litovsk, on making two separate treaties, one with Russia and another with Ukraine.—ED.

struggled as early as the times of Nestor was far from dead in any class of the population, whether educated or illiterate. As to the war, Kiev, which had been profoundly opposed to it, still maintained an even exaggerated loyalty to the Allies, and to war to the end. The Kiev of those times was under the influence of those thoughts which were expressed by the last Tsar in his farewell address to the troops,¹⁰ and also by the assurance that the Germans, in spite of their successes, would in the end have to give in. These circumstances conditioned the reception which Kiev gave to the Germans when in March 1918 they occupied the "Mother of Russian Towns". It is true the Ukrainophils covered the German officers with garlands of flowers, and the same was done by some who were not Ukrainophil, for which we cannot condemn them; we must remember that the Germans drove out the Bolsheviks—and they, on the very first night of their entry into Kiev, had shot several thousand Kievans on the streets of the city. However, one of the local newspapers, which was influential at that time, decided to close down as a protest against the German occupation.¹¹ Its last number contained a leading article beginning as follows: "World history and the future map of Europe will be marked out not in the streets of Kiev but on the fields of France where a bloody struggle is still going on. So to the Germans who have entered our town we must say: While there is war you are our enemies and cannot be anything else. We can only make one pledge and that we have made to the French and English, and that pledge we are determined to keep." But in accordance with its constant view of Russo-German relations and also in foresight of the future, the paper added; "When the war ends and peace draws up its accounts, honest enemies will perhaps understand each other better than dishonest friends." The phrase "dishonest friends" was directed against the Ukrainophils. We must be just to the Germans. Not only did they take no steps against the editors of the paper but in general their occupation was mild and cultured. Though officially they promoted the idea of an independent Ukrainian State, at the same time they tried in every way to soften any measure that might be distressing to Russians. More than that, German officers frankly

¹⁰ In this farewell address, which was not published by the Provisional Government, Nicholas II insisted on loyalty to the Allies. Its text will be found in *The Fall of the Russian Monarchy*, by Sir B. Pares, on pp. 472-3.—ED.

¹¹ In all probability, Mr. Shulgin's own paper, *Kievlainin*.—ED.

expressed themselves in the sense that in planting an Ukraine on us they were obeying orders from above. All the same, with the arrival of the Germans, Kiev as a Russian idea had to pass away into the catacombs. Up to their coming the attacks of the Ukrainophils had been victoriously repulsed; this may be seen from the following facts: the national census of the summer of 1917 gave for Kiev the following results: Russians 55%, Jews 18%, Ukrainophils 12%, Poles 10% and others 5%. Many Kievans served in the volunteer army whose object was to overthrow the Bolsheviks. The lover of chronologies will perhaps be interested in the succession of governments in Kiev during the revolution. The Imperial Power fell on 16 March, 1917; from that time to the present there have been thirteen governments.

1. All-Russian Provisional Government, to 14 November, 1917.
2. Ukrainian National Assembly to 8 February, 1918.
3. The Bolsheviks, to 1 March, 1918.
4. German occupation (under the rule of a student named Golubovich) to April, 1918.
5. German occupation (rule of Hetman Skoropadsky) to 14 December, 1918.
6. Ukrainian Directory, to February, 1919.
7. The Bolsheviks, to August, 1919.
8. Volunteer army, to 14 October, 1919.
9. The Bolsheviks, to 20 October, 1919.
10. Volunteer army, to 16 December, 1919.
11. The Bolsheviks, to 7 May, 1920.
12. The Poles, to 9 June, 1920.
13. The Bolsheviks, from 9 June, 1920.

Of what can this thousand-year-old city be dreaming? It grew up with the Varangers; it lost everything, freedom and glory—when these Varangers, quarrelling among themselves, surrendered Kiev to the sovereignty of the Tartar yoke. I think that the thoughts of Kiev are coloured by its past and that this past illuminates its present. Its present-day bondage it will ascribe to nothing else than a quarrel of Varangers among themselves.

Kiev is buried in the ground like that saint in the Lavra whose head is all that is seen. It cannot make the slightest movement, it can only think.

BASIL SHULGIN.